

small and weak as he, can do this thing forbidden by his inner mentor, and still be alive and safe and happy. Eating together with other children supports him against the feeling that it is a dangerous and a wicked thing. It has been found universally in nursery schools that most children who are difficult and reluctant feeders at home give little or no trouble at school, at any rate after the first few weeks of their nursery school life.

These are the deeper reasons which underlie the advice I am accustomed to give to mothers of such children, namely, not to attempt either to cajole or threaten the child, but leave him free to eat or not, as he will; and if at all possible, to arrange for him to share his meals with other children, especially in a well-run nursery school.

2. THUMB-SUCKING

The problem of thumb-sucking occurs frequently, and I am constantly approached about it by mothers and nurses. The general attitude is that it should be stopped, either because it looks unpleasant, or because of the risk of spoiling the shape of the teeth and jaw, or making the thumb sore, or some other rationalisation of this kind.

The behaviourists have made many pronouncements, too, on this issue, taking the line that thumb-sucking ought to be stopped because it leads to "introversion".

The underlying reason for people's wish to interfere with the child's thumb-sucking is, however, undoubtedly the intuitive awareness of its sexual nature, and the feeling that the child ought not to be allowed to indulge in such pleasures.

All these views assume that thumb-sucking is as such a cause of later psychological events, and that if it can be prevented, these later events will not ensue. If, however, my general argument has been clear, my readers will be ready to see that thumb-sucking is not so much a cause

as a symptom.
It is an expression of an intense need for oral
satisfaction,
the thumb being a substitute for the
mother's nipple, in
the first instance. It is resorted to because it is
always there
for the child, and oral frustrations can thus be
largely neutral-
lised by the child himself. At any time after
the earliest
days, however, thumb-sucking is by no means a
simple
reinstatement of primary oral gratification, but
also a re-
assurance against the *inner* dread of
punishment for biting